

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 308048
ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-14 ISO-00 PRS-01 H-02
SSM-05 SIG-02 SS-15 PA-02 INR-07 /081 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:WBHARRIS:TRT:DP
APPROVED BY NEA/P:REUNDELAND
S/PRS - MR. CARTER (INFO)
H - MR. FLATEN (INFO)
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW
NEA - MR. NEUMANN
NEA/IAI - MR. SMIIIH
NEA/ARN - MR. DRAPER
NEA/EGY - MR. NEWBERRY
NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

USCINCEUR
DOD
JCS
CIA
USIA
NSC

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CINCEUR FOR POLAD; TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9 A.M.

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS:PFOR

SUBJECT:DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - DECEMBER 27, 1977

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS
FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR DECEMBER 27. FYI ONLY,
OFFICER PRESENT TODAY WAS TOM RESTON.

MR. RESTON: WE ARE STILL IN THE PROCESS OF RECEIVING AND
ASSESSING THE REPORTS ON THE MEETINGS SUNDAY AND MONDAY
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BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AND PRESIDENT SADAT. AM-
BASSADORS LEWIS AND EILTS DID SEE THE PRIME MINISTER AND
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IT SEEMS TO US IMPORTANT AT THIS POINT TO MAINTAIN PER-
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AS 1977 ENDS THERE ARE NOW DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS DEALING WITH
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WE ARE PLEASED THAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE AT THE RECENT
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DIFFICULT PROBLEMS. THAT IS NOW THE WORK WHICH LIES AHEAD.

WE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE OBJECTIVE OF A COMPREHENSIVE
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SADAT AND PRIME MINISTER BEGIN. ESTABLISHING A NEGOTIATIVE
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Q. WILL SECRETARY VANCE PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE?

A. I DON'T WANT TO GIVE A FIRM ANSWER UNTIL WE HAVE READ THE REPORTS FROM AMBASSADORS LEWIS AND EILTS. I CAN SAY GENERALLY THAT THE SECRETARY STANDS READY TO DO WHATEVER WILL BE HELPFUL AND SUPPORTIVE.
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Q. DOES THAT INCLUDE GOING TO THE AREA, TO THE FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING PARTICULARLY?

A. I THINK THE SECRETARY HAS SAID TWO OR THREE WEEKS AGO THAT IF IT LOOKED LIKE IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR HIM TO ATTEND SUCH A MEETING THAT HE WOULD PROBABLY GO. NOW, AS TO PRECISELY WHEN THAT MIGHT BE OR EVEN IF IT COMES ABOUT, THAT DECISION HAS NOT YET BEEN MADE OR HOW LONG HE WOULD STAY IF HE WENT. WE JUST DON'T KNOW. BUT HE STANDS READY TO DO WHATEVER WOULD BE HELPFUL AND SUPPORTIVE.

Q. HAVE YOU RECIEVED ANY MESSAGE FROM SYRIA ON WHETHER PRESIDENT ASSAD WOULD BE MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY IN SAUDI ARABIA?

A. AS THE PRESIDENT HAS SAID, HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD IF IT COULD BE WORKED OUT. AT THIS TIME, HOWEVER, THERE ARE NO PLANS FOR SUCH A MEETING. NOW, OBVIOUSLY THE SYRIANS ARE INFORMED OF THE PRESIDENT'S VIEWS AND WE ARE IN CONTINUING TOUCH WITH THE SYRIANS. BUT I HAVE NOTHING MORE TO SAY ON THIS QUESTION AT THIS TIME

Q. BBC TV TODAY IN ITS AFTERNOON NEWS BRIEFS SAID THAT PRESIDENT ASSAD, KING HUSSEIN, AS WELL AS SADAT, WOULD MEET IN RIYADH WITH THE PRESIDENT. WILL YOU PLEASE TAKE THIS QUESTION FOR US?

A. I WILL BE HAPPY TO SEE WHETHER WE CAN FIND SOMETHING ON THAT. I HAVEN'T SEEN ANY SUCH REPORT.

Q. AM I TO INFER FROM WHAT YOU SAID THAT YOU ARE TRYING
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TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS WITH ASSAD?

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THINK IT WAS YESTERDAY IN PLAINS, THAT IT WOULD SUIT HIM FINE IF IT COULD BE WORKED OUT, IF SUCH A MEETING COULD BE WORKED OUT. I THINK I AM GOING TO HAVE TO STAY RIGHT THERE.

Q. IF YOU DON'T KNOW COULD YOU CHECK FOR US ON WHEN AMBASSADOR MURPHY LAST SAW PRESIDENT ASSAD?

A. I WOULD BE HAPPY TO TRY TO FIND OUT.

Q. AND HOW MANY TIMES HE HAS SEEN HIM IN THE LAST THREE OR FOUR DAYS?

A. YES SIR. I WILL BE HAPPY TO CHECK ON THAT.

Q. DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING THERE OR ANY COMMENT ON THE KILLING OF THE ARAB EDUCATION LEADER?

A. IF THE REPORTS WHICH WE HAVE SEEN IN THE PRESS ARE ACCURATE, WE OBVIOUSLY CONDEMN SUCH VIOLENCE. WE HAVE SEEN PRESS REPORTS THAT THE PLO HAS TAKEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS PARTICULAR ACTION AND I CAN'T CONFIRM THAT FOR YOU. BUT OBVIOUSLY WE CONDEMN SUCH VIOLENCE.

Q. YOU DON'T BELIEVE THEM?

A. I NEITHER BELIEVE NOR DISBELIEVE THE PLO. ALL I AM SAYING IS I CAN'T CONFIRM THAT WE HAVE INDEPENDENT INFORMATION THAT WHAT THEY SAY IS CORRECT.

Q. GOING BACK TO YOUR STATEMENT HERE, YOU REFER SEVERAL UNCLASSIFIED

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TIMES THAT THESE MEETINGS ARE AIMED AT ESTABLISHING A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. CAN WE TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER; THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD OBJECT IF WHAT WERE TO FLOW FROM THESE SERIES OF MEETINGS WOULD BE A SEPARATE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT?

A. NO. I AM NOT WILLING TO TAKE IT ANY FURTHER THAN WHERE I PUT IT AND WHERE WE HAVE BEEN PUTTING IT OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. BOTH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AND PRESIDENT SADAT AND PRESIDENT CARTER ARE ALL ON THE RECORD SAYING THAT THEY ARE WORKING TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. NOW, THAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THESE TALKS NOW AND UNTIL THAT OBJECTIVE CHANGES I AM NOT GOING TO SPECULATE ON A DIFFERENT SORT OF OBJECTIVE.

Q. WELL, THERE SEEMS TO BE A DUAL OBJECTIVE AT THE VERY LEAST DEVELOPING IN THE SENSE THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTERS ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT A MAP FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT, RATHER THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT A MAP OF THE SINAI WHICH WOULD

APPLY ONLY TO AN EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT '

A. I TAKE THAT POINT, BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT SIMPLY BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT NOW THAT THEY WON'T BE TALKING ABOUT OTHER ELEMENTS OF A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT IN OTHER MEETINGS. BUT THE OBJECTIVE REMAINS, THE OBJECTIVE OF MR. BEGIN AND MR. SADAT AND MR. CARTER. WE ARE ALL AGREED THAT WE ARE TRYING TO SEEK A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION.

NOW, A BILATERAL SETTLEMENT IS SOMETHING WHICH NONE OF THE PARTIES SAY THAT THEY ARE WORKING ON AND, THEREFORE, I CNA'T SPECULATE FOR YOU ON WHAT OUR ATTITUDE WOULD BE ON SOMETHING THAT JUST ISN'T, ACCORDING TO THE STATMENTS UNCLASSIFIED

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MADE BY THE VARIOUS LEADERS, WHAT THEY ARE WORKING ON.

Q. HAVE THERE BEEN ANY SUGGESTIONS BY THE AMERICANS ON HOW TO SOLVE THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM?

A. YES. SURE. WE HAVE ALL ALONG BEEN SUGGESTING WAYS TO NARROW THE DIFFERENCES AND TRY TO BE SUPPORTIVE AND HELPFUL IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS WITH REGARD TO THE WEST BANK, HOW TO SOLVE IT?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO GO INTO SPECIFIC AREAS OF WHAT OUR SUBSTANTIVE SUGGESTIONS HAVE BEEN, BUT QUITE CLEARLY WE HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS ON A NUMBER OF ELEMENTS OF A PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT OF THE QUESTION.

Q. IS THE UNITED STATES IN TOUCH WITH THE PALESTINIAN GROUPS ABOUT THIS?

A. FIRST LET ME SAY WE DO NOT DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE PLO. I JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT EVERYBODY UNDERSTANDS THAT WE HAVEN'T MOVED ON THAT ONE. I WOULD BE HAPPY TO TAKE THAT QUESTION AND SEE JUST EXACTLY WHETHER WE CAN GET AN ANSWER AS TO WHO WE HAVE BEEN TALKING WITH.

ALSO I WOULD LIKE, IF IT IS POSSIBLE, YOU TO TAKE THE QUESTION: WHO DO THESE LEADERS OF THESE GROUPS REPRESENT?

A. YES. I WILL SEE WHETHER I CAN'T TRY TO GET AN ANSWER TO THAT.

Q. IN 1917 THE UNITED STATES AND ENGLAND SIGNED A TREATY TO SECURE A HOMELAND FOR THE JEWS AT LEAST ON THE LAND OF PALESTINE. WHY DOESN'T THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT DO

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ANYTHING ABOUT SECURING A HOMELAND FOR THE PALESTINE PEOPLE RIGHT NOW AT THIS TIME? WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

A. WE ARE HERE AT THE END OF 1977 AND WE ARE DEALING WITH THINGS THAT ARE HERE ON THE TABLE NOW AND I THINK THEY ARE MORE RELEVANT TO THE QUESTION OF WHAT OUR PRACTICAL POSITION IS NOW THAN WHAT HAPPENED IN 1917.

Q. COULD YOU GET AN ANSWER ON THAT?

A. I WILL SEE, BUT I AM NOT HOPEFUL.

Q. WHAT ARE MR. ATHERTON'S PLANS, IS HE COMING BACK NOW, OR WILL HE STAY IN THE AREA AS AN OBSERVER?

A. I DON'T KNOW, BUT I WILL TRY TO FIND OUT FOR YOU. I'M SURE THAT WE CAN GET SOMETHING FOR YOU ON THAT.

Q. IN THE STATEMENT YOU SAY IT HAS BEEN OUR OBJECTIVE, WORKING WITH THE MIDDLE EASTERN PARTIES, TO ESTABLISH A PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION WHICH COULD LEAD TO A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE.

APART FROM TRYING TO BROADEN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE TAKING PART, DOES THE U.S. NOW THINK THAT THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATIONS HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED AND BASICALLY IT'S A QUESTION OF ARAB CAPITALS AND ISRAEL BEING A VENUE ON THE PLACE?
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A. WELL CLEARLY, THE MEETINGS WHICH TOOK PLACE THIS PAST WENESDAY, AND SUNDAY AND MONDAY, ARE A PART OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS WHICH IS GOING TO CONTINUE, WHICH BOTH PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AND PRESIDENT SADAT SAY THEY
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INTEND TO CONTINUE AT THE FOREIGN MINISTER LEVERL WITH THESE POLITICAL AND WORKING COMMITTEES AND THERE ARE PLANS NOW UNDER WAY FOR MEETINS IN THE MIDDLE OF JANUARY. WE SEE NO REASON WHYC THE STATED INTENTIONS OF THE PARTIES -- THOSE TWO PARTIES -- TO CONTINUE THIS PROCESS SHOULD NOT GO FORWARD. SO, YES, THERE IS A PROCESS IN PLACE.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING FURTHER THERE IN YOUR BRIEFING PAPERS AS TO THE EXTENT OF THE AMERICAN ROLE IN THE CONTINUING PROCESS?

A. NO, I THINK OUR ROLE IS TO BE SUPPORTIVE AND HELPFUL, TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS AS WE HAVE RIGHT ALONG OF WAYS TO

MOVE THAT PROCESS FORWARD. I DON'T THINK THERE HAS BEEN
A CHANGE IN OUR ROLE THERE.

Q. ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC PROPOSALS BEFORE YOU ON
EXPANDING THE AMERICAN SECURITY PRESENCE IN THE SINAI?

A. I HAVE NOTHING ON THAT.

Q. WAS THE UNITED STATES IN ANY WAY DISAPPOINTED BY THE
RESULTS IN ASMAILIA?

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VANCE

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FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 308048 ACTION AMMAN BIEURT CAIRO DAMASCUS
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SINAI DHAHRAN GENEVA KHARTOUM LONDON MOSCOW USNATO NOUAKCHOTT
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VANCE UNQUOTE VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 22-Sep-1999 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TEXT, PRESS CONFERENCES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 27-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE308048
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